

2019 School Choice Participation

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This Data Point uses data from the 2019 Parent and Family Involvement Survey of the National Household Education Surveys Program (PFI-NHES). The 2019 PFI collected data about students in kindergarten through grade 12. The survey explored many aspects of families' experiences with schooling, including how parents reported choosing schools for their children to attend.¹ This report explores the types of schools that children attended,² whether parents reported considering schools other than the one their child attends, and the percentage of students whose parents reported selected reasons as being "very important" when choosing a school. For the report, "public assigned schools" are schools that a local public school district assigned based on where the family lived;³ "public chosen schools" are public schools that were different from the school the district assigned; "private religious schools" are private schools that belonged to a particular religion or faith; and "private nonreligious schools" are private schools that were not religious.

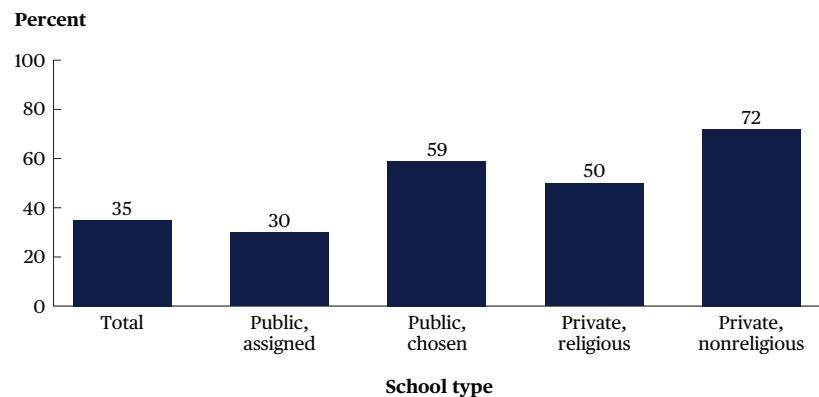
In 2019, what percentage of students had parents who reported considering schools other than the one their child attends and how did this vary by the types of schools the students attended?

In 2019, some 79 percent of all students enrolled in grades K-12 attended public assigned schools. Twelve percent of enrolled students attended public chosen schools, 7 percent attended private religious schools, and 2 percent attended private nonreligious schools (not shown in figure).

Seventy-two percent of students who attended private nonreligious schools had parents who reported considering schools other than the one their child attends—the highest percentage compared to students in other school types (**FIGURE 1**). This was followed by 59 percent of students attending public schools chosen by their parents. Fifty percent of students in private religious schools had parents who reported considering schools other than the one their child attends. Thirty percent of students who attended assigned public schools had parents who reported considering schools other than the one their child attends, which was the lowest compared to students in other school types.

In 2019, among students whose parents reported considering

FIGURE 1. Percentage of students enrolled in grades K-12 whose parents reported considering schools other than the one their child attends, by school type: 2019



NOTE: This figure includes students in kindergarten through grade 12 who were enrolled in schools. It excludes students whose parents reported that they were homeschooled for reasons other than temporary illness and attended a traditional school for less than 25 hours a week, which was 3 percent of the total sample. Data were provided by parents in early 2019. Information on school type comes from the Common Core of Data (CCD), the Private School Survey (PSS), and parent reports. Enrolled students whose school type was unknown (i.e., students who went to a public school but it is not clear if it was assigned or chosen; students who went to a private school but it is not clear if it was religious or nonreligious) as well as those students whose parents reported their child's school as private but the CCD reported as public are excluded from this figure; this excluded 2 percent of the total sample.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Parent and Family Involvement in Education Survey of the National Household Education Surveys Program (PFI-NHES), 2019.

schools other than the one their child attends, what percentage of students' parents rated various school characteristics as "very important" for their school choice decisions?

Parents who reported considering schools other than the one their

child attends were provided a list of reasons for choosing a school and asked how important each reason was to their choice, from "not at all important" to "very important." The list of reasons included the following:
 a) quality of teachers, principal, or other school staff; b) safety

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(including student discipline); c) curriculum focus or unique academic programs; d) academic performance of students; e) number of students in class; f) student body characteristics; g) extracurricular options; h) cost; i) convenient location; j) special facilities; and k) quality or availability of special education.⁴

Seventy-nine percent of students' parents rated the quality of teachers, principal, or other school staff as "very important" (**FIGURE 2**). Other factors that were selected as very important by over half of the students' parents were school safety (71 percent), curriculum focus or academic programs (60 percent), and academic performance of students at the school (53 percent).

Did the reasons for choosing schools differ by the kind of school the parent chose for their child?

Similar to the pattern observed for all students' parents who reported considering schools other than the one their child attends, students at all four types of schools had parents who commonly rated staff quality, safety, curriculum focus, and academic performance as "very important."⁵

Endnotes

¹ In this report, "parent" also includes nonparental guardians.

² The analysis excludes students whose parents reported that they were homeschooled for reasons other than temporary illness and attended a traditional school for less than 25 hours a week, which was 3 percent of the total sample. This analysis also excludes enrolled students with an unknown school type (i.e., students who went to a public school but it is not clear if it was assigned or chosen; students who went to a private school but it is not clear if it was religious or nonreligious) as well as those students whose parents reported their school as private but the Common Core of Data (CCD) reported as public; this excluded 2 percent of the total sample.

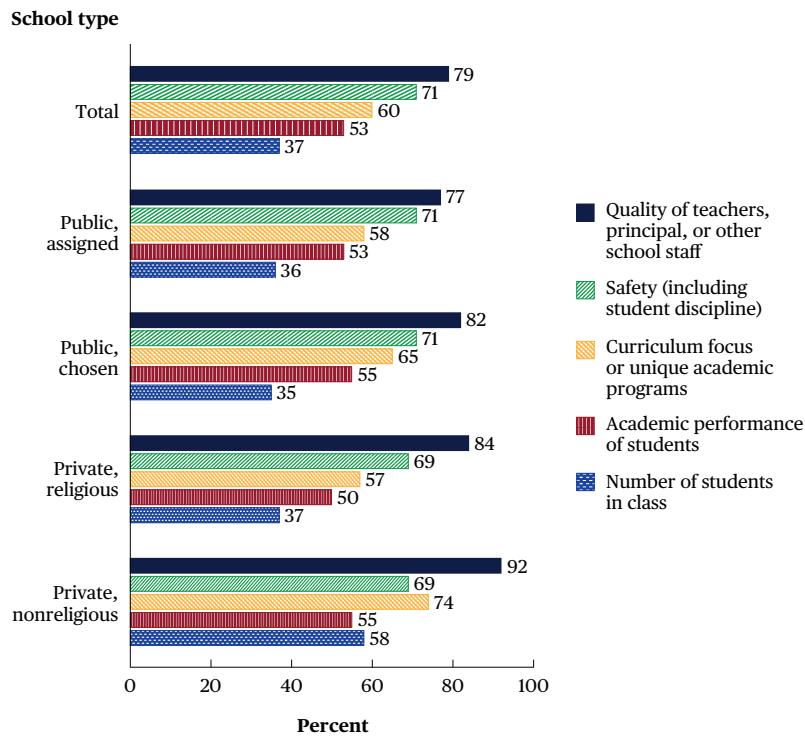
³ It is important to note that the category of "public, assigned" does include some families who reported considering schools other than the one their child attends. For these families, the public assigned school can be considered a school of choice.

⁴ Estimates for some reasons are not shown in figure 2; the figure only includes the five reasons with the highest percentages of parents selecting the reason as "very important." Please refer to [supplemental tables](#) to view estimates

for all reasons included in this analysis. Please note that the questionnaire also asked about the religious orientation of the school, which was not included in this analysis.

⁵ An exception to this general pattern existed for students in private nonreligious schools, where there was no measurable difference in the percentages of parents who rated academic performance and the number of students in class as "very important."

FIGURE 2. Among students enrolled in grades K-12 whose parents reported considering schools other than the one their child attends, percentage whose parents rated listed reasons for choosing a school as "very important," by school type: 2019



NOTE: This figure includes the 35 percent of students in kindergarten through grade 12 who were enrolled in schools and whose parents reported considering schools other than the one their child attends. It excludes students whose parents reported that they were homeschooled for reasons other than temporary illness and attended a traditional school for less than 25 hours a week, which was 3 percent of the total sample. Enrolled students whose school type was unknown (i.e., students who went to a public school but it is not clear if it was assigned or chosen; students who went to a private school but it is not clear if it was religious or nonreligious) as well as those students whose parents reported their child's school as private but the Common Core of Data (CCD) reported as public are excluded; this excluded 2 percent of the total sample.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Parent and Family Involvement in Education Survey of the National Household Education Surveys Program (PFI-NHES), 2019.